Performance at school and performance at university: what is the link?

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Governments throughout the world are trying to improve the stock of human capital. To this effect, university enrollments are on an upward trend. Often, however, this expansion takes place without the necessary preparation at secondary school. As a result, when students enter university they find themselves unprepared and unable to follow the curriculum. This then leads to a high drop-out rate from academic studies, prolongation of studies and dents the quality of tertiary education.

Between 2001 and 2014 the number of students registering in their first year of University studies in Greece increased by nearly 22%. The number of university graduates, on the other hand, appears untrended for the last decade. Between 2006 and 2009 efforts were made to improve the inflow into higher education (establishment of a threshold grade for entry in addition to the *numerus clausus* system followed) and to limit the duration of university studies (maximum length of studies was set to n+2 years where n are the minimum years of study). Both have been since abolished.

This paper is concerned with trying to assess the high school preparation of economics students. More specifically the paper attempts to answer the following questions:

First, are maths or verbal skills more important for the academic performance of economics students. The paper uses school performance and academic performance data for economics undergraduates in an Economics Department of a leading University between 2004/5 and 2009/10 along the lines of Dolado and Morales, 2007 and Aucejo and James, 2015. As grades are heavily concentrated on the passing rate, after retake, we exploit the discontinuity just below and just above the passing rate in the first attempt of students to pass the exam.

Second, we want to find the impact that the introduction of the threshold for admission had on high school and university performance of students enrolled at University.

Finally, we investigate the impact on time to degree of the restriction on the length of studies.

References

Dolado, J.J. and E. Morales (2007), "Which factors determine academic performance of undergraduate students in economics? Some Spanish evidence", FEDEA Working Paper 23.

Aucejo, E.M. and J. James (2015), "The Path to College Education: Are Verbal Skills More Important than Math Skills?", mimeo, LSE.